



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

June 3, 2005

News Release

ICE AND COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES TEAM UP TO SEIZE 87 PROPERTIES AND BANK ACCOUNTS VALUED AT \$105 MILLION

-- Ranches, Parking Garages Homes, Businesses, Bank Accounts in Colombia Tied to Drug Cartels --

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Homeland Security’s U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced that Colombian National Judicial Police officers assigned to the ICE Financial Investigations Unit in Colombia, in coordination with the ICE Attaché in Colombia have executed 87 seizure warrants near Cali, Colombia in connection with a major ongoing drug money laundering investigation.

These properties, which included 19 bank accounts, 17 residences, 15 businesses/companies, 13 parking garages, 12 ranches/farms, nine undeveloped lots, a hotel and a storage facility, were titled under **Javier Baena-Velez**’s name, the alleged “straw” owner for various drug trafficking and money laundering organizations including those headed by fugitives **Diego Leon Montoya-Sanchez** and **Wilber Alirio Varela**.

Baena Velez has been the target of previous ICE and Colombian narcotics investigations and according to the Colombian police he has been involved in drug trafficking and money laundering activities since the early 1990’s.

Montoya-Sanchez and **Varela** have been indicted by ICE and the FBI on money laundering and drug trafficking charges. Both are currently fugitives from justice and the U.S. State Department is offering \$5 million for information leading to their arrests.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.